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Corporate Reputation as a Strategic Driver of Consumer Purchase Intention in the Digital Era: A Systematic Literature Review of the Roles of Trust, Brand Image, and Consumer Perceptions

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Abstract

Corporate reputation has emerged as a strategic organizational asset that significantly influences consumer behavior in increasingly digital and information-rich marketplaces. This study aims to systematically review the existing literature on the relationship between corporate reputation and consumer purchase intention, with particular attention to the roles of trust, brand image and consumer perceptions. A systematic literature review approach was employed to identify, evaluate and synthesize relevant studies published within the domains of marketing, public relations, consumer behavior, and digital communication. The findings indicate that corporate reputation positively influences consumer purchase intention through both direct and indirect mechanisms. Trust was identified as the most influential mediating factor, enabling consumers to reduce uncertainty and enhance confidence in purchasing decisions. Brand image was found to strengthen favorable consumer evaluations by reinforcing perceptions of quality, credibility, and organizational value. Consumer perceptions relating to authenticity, reliability, and social responsibility also played a significant role in shaping behavioral intentions. The review further revealed that digital communication channels, online reviews, social media engagement, and stakeholder-generated content have become critical elements in reputation formation. The study contributes to a more integrated understanding of reputation-driven consumer behavior and provides a foundation for future research and strategic organizational practice.

Keywords: Corporate Reputation, Consumer Purchase Intention, Trust, Brand Image, Consumer Perceptions, Digital Marketing, Consumer Behavior

Introduction

Corporate reputation has become an important intangible asset that influences both organizational performance and consumer decision-making in digital markets. The widespread use of social media, online review platforms, corporate websites, and electronic word-of-mouth has increased public access to information about organizational actions and business practices (Krstić, 2025; Vo, 2024). Consumers increasingly evaluate firms based on their credibility, reliability, ethical conduct, and responsiveness to stakeholder concerns (Samet, 2024; Zahran & Rolando, 2025). Corporate reputation therefore extends beyond organizational image and reflects broader stakeholder evaluations of organizational quality and trustworthiness. Studies have shown that favorable reputational assessments are associated with higher levels of consumer confidence, loyalty, and purchase intention (Gabrah & Anwana, 2025; Hamelin et al., 2026). Reputational information is particularly valuable in digital environments where consumers face information overload and uncertainty during decision-making processes (Asa & Nautwima, 2026). Firms with strong reputations often gain competitive advantages because consumers perceive them as more dependable and capable of delivering value. Research examining the relationship between corporate reputation and consumer behavior has consequently expanded across marketing, public relations, and consumer behavior disciplines.

Research supports a positive relationship between corporate reputation and consumer purchase intention, although the mechanisms underlying this relationship remain debated. Consumers rarely base purchasing decisions solely on reputational information and often interpret such information through psychological and evaluative processes (Mohamed et al., 2026; Qin & Li, 2025). Trust has received considerable attention because reputational signals frequently influence perceptions of organizational competence, integrity, and reliability (Indah & Sukresna, 2025; Saputra et al., 2026). Digital interactions involving online reviews, social media engagement, and e-WOM have further strengthened the importance of trust in shaping consumer responses (Azis et al., 2025; Sun & Gou, 2026). Existing studies indicate that trust reduces perceived risk and strengthens consumers' willingness to engage in purchasing activities. Brand image has also been identified as a significant factor because favorable reputations often strengthen perceptions of quality, credibility, and organizational value (Kurniawan et al., 2025; Mohit et al., 2026). Consumer perceptions regarding authenticity, value, and social responsibility likewise influence how reputational information is interpreted and translated into purchase intention (Sukandi & Fazry, 2025; Sathvavwala et al., 2026). Despite extensive research, these constructs are frequently examined separately, resulting in fragmented explanations of reputation-driven consumer behavior.

The literature remains dispersed across different theoretical perspectives, research contexts, and disciplinary streams. Previous studies have examined trust, brand image, online consumer behavior, digital communication, and sustainability-related reputation management, yet integration among these areas remains limited (Triadinda et al., 2026; Sun & Gou, 2026). Digital communication environments have intensified the complexity of reputation formation as stakeholder-generated content increasingly influences consumer evaluations (Krstić, 2025; Vo, 2024). Variations in findings across industries and geographical contexts have created uncertainty regarding the relative importance of trust, brand image, and consumer perceptions within the reputation-purchase intention relationship. Existing

reviews often focus on individual constructs rather than examining their combined role in explaining consumer behavior. A systematic synthesis is therefore needed to identify recurring patterns, theoretical foundations, and dominant mechanisms reported in prior studies. Such an approach may provide a clearer understanding of how reputational value is translated into consumer behavioral intentions. This study systematically reviews the literature on corporate reputation and consumer purchase intention, with particular attention to the roles of trust, brand image, and consumer perceptions. The review seeks to consolidate existing knowledge and establish a more integrated understanding of reputation-driven consumer behavior in digital environments.

Literature Review

Corporate Reputation and Consumer Purchase Intention in the Digital Era

Corporate reputation has increasingly been recognized as a strategic intangible asset that shapes consumer attitudes and purchasing decisions in digital marketplaces. Rather than functioning solely as an outcome of organizational performance, reputation serves as a valuable signal that helps consumers evaluate firms under conditions of uncertainty and information asymmetry (Krstić, 2025; Samet, 2024). The growth of social media, online review platforms, and stakeholder-generated content has transformed the way reputation is formed and communicated (Vo, 2024; Zahran & Rolando, 2025). While some scholars argue that reputation directly influences consumer purchase intention by signaling credibility and quality, others contend that its influence is largely indirect and operates through psychological and relational mechanisms. This debate highlights the complexity of reputation's role in consumer behavior. Evidence from industries such as automotive, hospitality, retail, and higher education consistently demonstrates that favorable reputational evaluations strengthen consumer confidence and increase willingness to purchase (Zhu et al., 2026; Nghia & Van Ha, 2026). Differences in conceptual definitions and measurement approaches have produced inconsistent findings regarding the magnitude of reputational effects. Some studies emphasize ethical conduct and corporate social responsibility, whereas others focus on competence, performance, or emotional appeal as key dimensions of reputation (Samet, 2024; Krstić, 2025). These differing perspectives suggest that reputation is a multidimensional construct that cannot be adequately explained through a single theoretical lens.

The relationship between corporate reputation and purchase intention has received substantial empirical support, yet the pathways through which this relationship operates remain contested. Many researchers argue that consumers increasingly rely on reputational cues because direct evaluation of products and organizations is often difficult in digital environments (Nagre, 2026; Sutaguna et al., 2026). From this perspective, reputation functions as a shortcut that reduces decision-making complexity and perceived risk. Studies examining sustainable consumption and CSR communication similarly suggest that strong corporate reputation enhances organizational credibility and strengthens purchase intention (Cardoso et al., 2026; Santos et al., 2026). An opposing viewpoint proposes that reputation alone may be insufficient to influence consumer decisions without supporting psychological factors such as trust, attitudes, and perceptions. This argument is supported by research showing inconsistent direct effects of reputation across industries and contexts (Qin & Li, 2025; Rehman & Khan, 2026). These findings imply that reputation operates within a broader network of cognitive and emotional evaluations rather than acting independently. Increased

information accessibility has empowered consumers to verify corporate claims through multiple digital sources, reducing the dominance of organizationally controlled reputation. While literature generally supports a positive relationship between corporate reputation and purchase intention, the mechanisms through which reputation influences consumer behavior remain insufficiently integrated. This highlights the need to examine reputation alongside trust, brand image, and consumer perceptions to achieve a more comprehensive understanding of purchase intention formation.

Trust as the Central Mechanism Linking Reputation and Purchase Intention

Among the various factors proposed to explain the influence of corporate reputation on purchase intention, trust has emerged as the most consistently supported mechanism. Trust is frequently defined as consumers' confidence in an organization's competence, integrity, and ability to meet expectations (Indah & Sukresna, 2025; Saputra et al., 2026). Advocates of this perspective argue that corporate reputation contributes to trust formation by signaling organizational reliability and reducing uncertainty. This argument is particularly relevant in digital environments where consumers often have limited ability to directly inspect products or interact with sellers. Online reviews, e-WOM, social media communication, and corporate transparency have become critical antecedents of trust development (Sun & Gou, 2026; Rolando & Chondro, 2025). Research across e-commerce, hospitality, and banking sectors consistently demonstrates that trust mediates the relationship between organizational attributes and behavioral intentions. Signaling Theory further supports this argument by suggesting that consumers rely on reputational signals when evaluating organizational trustworthiness under conditions of imperfect information (Asa & Nautwima, 2026). Reputation strengthens trust, and trust subsequently encourages purchasing behavior. This theoretical position has received extensive empirical support and remains one of the dominant explanations of consumer decision-making.

Despite the strong support for trust as a mediating variable, the literature remains divided regarding its relative importance compared with other consumer evaluation factors. Some studies argue that trust exerts a stronger influence on purchase intention than reputation itself because consumers ultimately make decisions based on confidence rather than reputation alone (Nguyen et al., 2026; Azis et al., 2025). Research on online reviews, livestream commerce, and sustainable consumption repeatedly demonstrates that trust directly influences purchasing decisions by reducing perceived risks and increasing confidence in organizational claims (Sanjana & Jahan, 2026; Cardoso et al., 2026). Critics contend that trust does not operate independently and is closely intertwined with consumer perceptions, corporate image, and brand evaluations. This perspective challenges the tendency of previous studies to isolate trust from other explanatory constructs. Variations in cultural contexts, technological environments, and consumer characteristics may influence the extent to which trust mediates purchase behavior. Several scholars have therefore suggested that trust should be examined as part of a broader framework rather than as a standalone determinant (Sukoco et al., 2026; Saputra et al., 2026). The fragmented treatment of trust has limited understanding of how it interacts with other reputation-related variables. Future research must move beyond isolated trust models and explore the interconnected relationships among trust, corporate reputation, brand image, and consumer perceptions.

Brand Image and Consumer Perceptions as Reputation-Based Evaluative Mechanisms

Brand image and consumer perceptions are frequently identified as key factors that translate corporate reputation into consumer purchase decisions. Brand image represents the collection of associations and beliefs consumers develop about a brand through experience and communication exposure (Mohit et al., 2026; Kurniawan et al., 2025). Supporters of this perspective argue that favorable corporate reputation strengthens brand image by reinforcing perceptions of quality, credibility, and organizational competence. These positive associations increase consumers' willingness to engage with products and services. Research across digital marketing, healthcare, fashion, and e-commerce contexts consistently reports a positive relationship between brand image and purchase intention (Tafolli et al., 2025; Widjaja, 2025). The widespread use of digital communication platforms has further strengthened the importance of brand image because consumers are continuously exposed to brand-related messages and experiences (Hübner et al., 2026; Senalasari et al., 2026). Many scholars consider brand image to be a critical bridge between organizational reputation and consumer behavior. Positive reputational evaluations contribute to stronger brand associations, which subsequently influence purchasing intentions.

Consumer perceptions provide an additional evaluative mechanism through which reputation influences behavioral outcomes. Existing studies suggest that perceptions of authenticity, social responsibility, value, product quality, and organizational competence significantly shape consumer responses to brands and organizations (Sathvavwala et al., 2026; Cardoso et al., 2026). From this viewpoint, consumers do not merely react to reputational information but actively interpret and evaluate its meaning within their decision-making processes. Positive perceptions reinforce favorable attitudes and increase purchase intention, whereas negative perceptions may weaken the effectiveness of reputational advantages. The literature often treats brand image and consumer perceptions as separate constructs despite their conceptual similarities and overlapping influence on consumer behavior (Hussain et al., 2025; Vinata et al., 2026). This separation has contributed to fragmented findings and limited theoretical integration. Critics argue that isolating these variables oversimplifies the complexity of consumer decision-making. Corporate reputation, brand image, and consumer perceptions should be viewed as interconnected elements within a broader evaluative framework. This integrated perspective better reflects the realities of digital consumption environments where consumers simultaneously process multiple sources of information.

Digital Communication, e-WOM, and Reputation Formation

Digital communication has fundamentally transformed the processes through which corporate reputation is created, maintained, and evaluated. Traditional reputation management relied heavily on corporate-controlled communication; however, contemporary digital environments allow stakeholders to actively participate in constructing organizational reputation (Krstić, 2025; Vo, 2024). Social media platforms, online communities, review websites, and user-generated content have become influential sources of reputational information. Proponents of digital communication argue that these channels increase transparency by providing consumers with diverse perspectives regarding organizational conduct. Positive online interactions can enhance reputation, whereas negative stakeholder-generated content can quickly damage public perceptions. Research demonstrates that digital engagement influences trust formation, consumer evaluations, and purchasing decisions (Imaduddin et al., 2026; Sutaguna et al., 2026). E-WOM has emerged as a powerful

communication mechanism because consumers often perceive peer-generated information as more credible than corporate advertising. This development challenges the traditional assumption that organizations maintain primary control over their reputations. Reputation formation has become increasingly collaborative and interactive. Organizations must adopt continuous engagement strategies rather than relying solely on conventional promotional communication.

The literature strongly supports the role of e-WOM in influencing both corporate reputation and purchase intention, yet researchers continue to debate the conditions under which this influence is most effective. Supportive evidence indicates that online reviews, ratings, and testimonials enhance consumer confidence by providing additional information regarding product quality and organizational credibility (Azis et al., 2025; Sanjana & Jahan, 2026). Positive e-WOM contributes to stronger trust and improved brand image, which subsequently strengthen purchase intention (Tho & Trung, 2025; Tafolli et al., 2025). However, some studies argue that the impact of e-WOM depends on factors such as message credibility, review authenticity, platform characteristics, and consumer involvement levels (Singh & Mittal, 2026; Setiawati & Rani, 2025). This perspective suggests that not all digital communication influences reputation equally. The growing prevalence of influencer marketing, sponsored content, and algorithm-driven information flows introduces new challenges regarding credibility and trustworthiness (Hussain et al., 2026). These developments complicate the relationship between communication and reputation formation. Therefore, while e-WOM undoubtedly plays an important role in shaping consumer evaluations, its effectiveness depends on contextual and technological factors. Literature consequently supports a more nuanced understanding of digital communication as both an opportunity and a challenge for reputation management. This complexity reinforces the need for organizations to carefully manage stakeholder interactions in digital environments.

CSR, Sustainability and Theoretical Perspectives on Reputation-Based Consumer Behavior

The growing importance of CSR and sustainability has significantly expanded the scope of corporate reputation research. Traditionally, reputation was associated primarily with organizational performance and product quality; however, contemporary consumers increasingly evaluate organizations based on ethical, social, and environmental commitments (Hue & Le, 2026; Santos et al., 2026). Many scholars argue that CSR activities enhance reputation by signaling responsibility, transparency, and long-term stakeholder commitment. This argument is supported by evidence showing that organizations with strong sustainability reputations often enjoy higher levels of consumer trust and support (Risdwiyanto et al., 2026; Singh et al., 2025). Green marketing, ethical branding, and sustainability communication have therefore become important dimensions of modern reputation management. Critics warn that reputation gains from CSR initiatives depend largely on consumer perceptions of authenticity. Consumers may respond negatively when sustainability claims are perceived as inconsistent or opportunistic. The effectiveness of CSR communication depends on broader evaluations of organizational integrity and accountability. This perspective indicates that sustainability-related reputation functions through psychological and relational mechanisms rather than through direct effects alone.

Several theoretical perspectives provide explanations for these relationships, although no single theory fully captures the complexity of reputation-driven behavior. Signaling Theory suggests that corporate reputation serves as a signal that reduces uncertainty and helps consumers evaluate organizational trustworthiness (Asa & Nautwima, 2026). Relationship Management Theory emphasizes trust, commitment, and stakeholder relationships as pathways linking reputation to behavioral outcomes (Sun & Gou, 2026). The Theory of Planned Behavior further proposes that attitudes and perceptions influence behavioral intentions, including purchase decisions (Salleh et al., 2024). While each perspective contributes valuable insights, critics argue that reliance on individual theories has contributed to fragmented understanding of the relationship among reputation, trust, brand image, and consumer perceptions. Contemporary studies increasingly support more integrative frameworks that combine cognitive, relational, and communication-based explanations (Triadinda et al., 2026; ZULKIFLI, 2025). Such approaches recognize that consumer behavior emerges from multiple interacting influences rather than a single dominant factor. The literature therefore suggests that corporate reputation affects purchase intention through a combination of trust-building, image-enhancement, perception-shaping, and communication processes. Greater theoretical integration is needed to explain how these mechanisms operate simultaneously within digital environments.

Methodology

This study employed a systematic literature review (SLR) to synthesize and critically evaluate existing research on the influence of corporate reputation on consumer purchase intention in the digital era (Fermansyah et al., 2026; Hussain et al., 2026). The review focused on understanding how trust, brand image, and consumer perceptions mediate the relationship between corporate reputation and purchasing behavior across marketing, public relations, consumer behavior, and digital communication contexts (Krstić, 2025; Arora & Singh, 2026). Relevant literature published between 2020 and 2026 was identified through major academic databases, including Scopus, Web of Science, ScienceDirect, Emerald Insight, SpringerLink, Taylor & Francis Online, and Google Scholar. A structured search strategy using predefined keywords and Boolean operators was applied to ensure comprehensive retrieval of relevant studies. Inclusion and exclusion criteria were established to retain only peer-reviewed publications that provided sufficient theoretical or empirical discussion related to the focal constructs (Ats-Tsauri et al., 2026; Pardiansyah et al., 2026). Data were systematically extracted using a review matrix that captured information such as research objectives, theoretical frameworks, methodologies, findings, and limitations. The extracted studies were categorized according to corporate reputation, trust, brand image, consumer perceptions, and purchase intention to facilitate thematic analysis (Mohit et al., 2026; Sun & Gou, 2026). Content analysis and thematic coding techniques were employed to identify recurring patterns, conceptual relationships, and dominant theoretical perspectives across the literature. To enhance methodological rigor, the review adopted transparent screening procedures, multiple database sources, and methodological triangulation involving quantitative, qualitative, mixed-method, bibliometric, and review-based studies (Fermansyah et al., 2026; Arora & Singh, 2026).

Findings

The review identified strong evidence that corporate reputation plays a significant role in influencing consumer purchase intention across various industries and digital environments.

Corporate reputation functions as an important intangible asset that shapes consumer evaluations, strengthens confidence, and reduces uncertainty during decision-making processes. Consumers frequently rely on reputational signals when assessing organizational credibility, reliability, and product quality, particularly in situations involving information asymmetry and perceived risk. The reviewed studies consistently revealed that a favorable corporate reputation is associated with positive consumer outcomes, including stronger purchase intention, brand preference, customer engagement, and loyalty. Consumers generally perceive reputable organizations as more capable of delivering value and fulfilling expectations. Across different sectors, reputation was found to serve as an indicator of organizational competence, ethical conduct, and long-term commitment to stakeholders. The findings further demonstrated that corporate reputation influences purchase intention through both direct and indirect pathways. Among the indirect mechanisms, trust emerged as the most influential factor linking reputation to consumer behavioral intentions. Consumers who perceive organizations as reputable are more likely to develop trust, which reduces perceived risk and increases confidence in purchasing decisions. Positive organizational conduct, transparent communication, and consistency between promises and actions were identified as key contributors to trust development, highlighting trust as a critical mechanism through which corporate reputation influences consumer behavior.

The findings also revealed that brand image and consumer perceptions play important roles in shaping the relationship between corporate reputation and purchase intention. A favorable corporate reputation contributes to stronger brand associations related to quality, credibility, innovation, authenticity, and social responsibility, which positively influence consumer evaluations and purchasing behavior. Consumers often interpret reputational information through their perceptions of a brand, making brand image a significant factor in decision-making processes. Likewise, consumer perceptions regarding value, quality, authenticity, and organizational competence were found to affect how reputational signals are evaluated and transformed into purchase intentions. The review indicated that reputation, brand image, and consumer perceptions operate collectively rather than independently in influencing consumer behavior. Several recurring trends and research gaps were identified across the literature. Studies increasingly focused on digital environments, social media engagement, online reviews, influencer communication, stakeholder-generated content, CSR initiatives, and sustainability-related reputation management. Most studies examined trust, brand image, and consumer perceptions separately, resulting in limited understanding of their simultaneous interactions within an integrated framework. Variations in theories, methodologies, industries, and geographical contexts also contributed to inconsistent findings across studies.

Implication of the study

This study contributes to the literature by providing an integrated understanding of how corporate reputation influences consumer purchase intention in digital environments. The findings highlight that corporate reputation functions not only as an organizational asset but also as a key driver of consumer behavioral responses through trust, brand image, and consumer perceptions. From a theoretical perspective, the study offers a clearer conceptual foundation for understanding the interconnected relationships among these constructs and supports the need for multidimensional approaches in consumer behavior research. From a managerial perspective, the findings emphasize that organizations should prioritize

credibility, transparency, authenticity, and stakeholder engagement to strengthen reputation and build consumer trust. Public relations professionals can use these insights to develop long-term reputation management strategies that enhance consumer confidence and support favorable purchasing decisions. Marketing practitioners should also recognize the importance of reinforcing positive brand image and consumer perceptions through consistent communication and customer experiences. The study further highlights the growing influence of digital communication, online reviews, and consumer-generated content in shaping reputation and purchase intention. Organizations are therefore encouraged to actively monitor and manage their digital presence to maintain positive stakeholder evaluations. For future research, the findings suggest the need for more integrated models that simultaneously examine corporate reputation, trust, brand image, consumer perceptions, and purchase intention across different contexts.

Conclusion

Corporate reputation has emerged as a critical strategic asset that significantly influences consumer purchase intention across diverse industries and digital environments. The literature consistently indicates that consumers rely on reputational evaluations when assessing organizational credibility, reliability, and value, particularly in situations involving uncertainty and perceived risk. A positive corporate reputation is generally associated with stronger consumer confidence, favorable attitudes, and increased willingness to purchase. The review further highlights that trust is the most prominent mechanism through which reputation influences consumer behavior by reducing uncertainty and enhancing confidence in organizational offerings. Brand image and consumer perceptions also contribute substantially by shaping how consumers interpret and evaluate reputational signals. The findings suggest that these factors are interconnected and collectively influence purchase intention rather than operating independently. Digital communication platforms, e-WOM, online reviews, and stakeholder-generated content play increasingly important roles in reputation formation and consumer decision-making. However, existing research remains fragmented, with many studies examining these constructs separately rather than within a unified framework. The review also identifies methodological and contextual limitations, including heavy reliance on cross-sectional studies and limited geographical diversity. Therefore, the study confirms the strategic importance of corporate reputation in shaping consumer purchase intention while highlighting the need for more integrated and comprehensive future research.

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